

Free thought

The Largest Circulated Rationalist Monthly

February, 1979

80 Paise



" Vinoba Bhave demands ban on cow Slaughter" — A Report

X No 2

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REASON THINKS; RELIGION DREAMS.

Letters..

Sir,

I am lucky enough to come across your monthly journal FREETHOUGHT. This journal has really given me an impetus to express and practise rationalistic ideas dormant in me for many years. With the encouragement of your journal, I express these ideas to people who believe in illusory things, supernatural powers, mysticism, miracles and age-old superstitions. To enlighten the people and to bring them to serve the suffering humanity, your journal really needs much encouragement.

Hence I am very happy to donate Rs. 10 along with my student membership fee.

—Sridharababu, M. Kolar,

* *

Sir,

I am very much impressed by the contents in the October, November and December 78 issues of FREETHOUGHT.

Please convey my heartiest congratulations to the new J.R.A. President, Mr. Y. A. Lokhandwala. I wish him all the best.

—V. R. Kulkarni, Poona.

* *

Sir,

I am a reader of FREETHOUGHT. I work sincerely for Rationalism by propagating rationalistic ideas and principles. I purchase, read and circulate many of the Rationalistic publications in different languages. I like to devote my time and money for propagating rationalism among my friends, colleagues, neighbours and relatives.

—K. M. Chellappan, Bangalore

DOES GOD EXIST?

Sir,

I happened to come across your FREE-THOUGHT through a friend of mine. I have also subsequently read some of the past issues. All I can say is that contrary to what you preach, the magazine helps me to consolidate my faith in God!

Unbelief says Man evolved from the ape. This means that at a certain moment an animal started to speak without the aid of a higher intelligent being. No child learns to speak without being taught by an adult. How did the ape achieve what a child cannot? An atheist shoemaker told his son that nature exists by itself, to which his son replied, "Then it is easier to have the whole nature than a pair of shoes. For these you have to work hard." If the whole of nature is the random result of the evolution of matter, why don't atheists leave to nature the production of godless books? Why do they work with great diligence to create them? Even this magazine is the very proof that behind every organised thing there exists an intelligent design.

This is my FAITH; and I know that my faith is non-scientific but not unscientific! Comments are superfluous!

—V. Sequeira,
Baroda.

(The above is unedited letter from a believer for whom naturally any comments are superfluous! But as Rationalists, we believe in arguments and counter arguments. The readers — both believers and unbelievers may like to offer their comments on the above argument. —Ed)

Please Note.....

Due to paucity of space, the serial 'Vacuum Argument—Myth, Mystery or Fact' by P. K. Narayanan could not be published in this issue. —Ed.

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

"One of the greatest benefits Science can bestow is to liberate mankind from the reign of the gods".

—Hogben, English Educator and Scientist.

Vol. IX FEBRUARY, 1979

No 2

Freethought

HUMAN RIGHTS

Thanks to Mr. Jimmy Carter of U.S., the above has gained respectability, if not acceptability. Governments all over the world, including the U.S. have enough skeletons in their cupboards that they will encourage probes by Human Rights groups only as long as the investigations are not carried out within their frontiers.

RACIALISM

Carter, for all external appearances, is religious and tradition-bound. Atrocities committed in the name of religion or those perpetrated by autocrats friendly to U.S. were, in the original scheme of things, to be overlooked. Is it meant essentially to be an anti-communist propaganda weapon? What else can we make of it when South Africa and Rhodesia are sheltered and supported by U.S.A., inspite of the regimes there being the worst criminals against elementary human rights? They treat their pets better than they treat Africans. How shabbily are the Afro-Americans treated in U.S.A. itself? Even rationalists are not too enthusiastic, under one pretext or the other, about integration of races. How did the whites in USA and Australia exterminate the original inhabitants of their respective countries? The English speaking nations UK, USA, Australia and Canada have fanned racial hatred, thus unsettling a few hundred thousands (a very microscopic percentage of the under-developed countries) of the coloured population who have given their

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Editor :
C. A. SESHADRI

sweat and blood to the lands of their adoption. The coloureds are under constant fear and psychological pressure. Have they no right to stay in freedom and comfort?

As American rationalists confirm, a person can be anti-religious only at the peril of his job. One can be anti-communist only if one is willing to give up all rights to private life, thanks to F.B.I. and C.I.A. Is freedom of conscience only for religious believers? Is that what the campaign is expected to achieve? Then, call it the "believers' rights" campaign.

CASE OF A CHILD:

How does one expect his right to be protected when a child is indoctrinated in the parents' religious ignorance and superstition before being given a chance to know other view points? Is the child the private 'property' of the parents? Have not the society a say in the matter—the society which is expected to invest and subsidise the child's education and employment.

Are human rights confined to religion? Does it not pervade all human needs including employment and education? For a person in Asia, Africa or Latin America, the right to employment is the most significant right. Has this been assured or sought to be assured after decades of 'democratic' rule? How well have the advanced nations discharged their obligations?

IN INDIA

In the under-developed countries there are many who are fighting for the exploited peasants and workers. These constructive workers are often rounded up under the pretext that either they resorted to violence or incited violence. Landlords, whose sole preserves are our villages, find these preachers of human rights inconvenient. The

administration, judiciary and the police, belong the handmaids of landlords and the urban rich, label these missionaries, take them into custody, torture them or keep them for long years without trial. Have these persons no right to conscience? Have they not a right to preach a new economic and social order, if they are not satisfied with the present set-up? If after 32 years of 'freedom' and 'democracy', our 'leaders' are unable to assure basic rights to the people, should not the masses be informed of alternative ways to satiate ordinary human needs? 'Human rights' propaganda, think!



FOREIGN JOURNALS FOR SALE

A few copies of the following Rationalist journals are available for sale:

	Price per issue. Rs.
1. The Truth Seeker (USA)...	1 50
2. The American Rationalist.	2 00
3. The Atheist (USA) ...	2 00
4. The New Zealand Rationalist & Humanist.	2 00
5. Progressive World (USA).	5 00
6. The Atheist Journal ...	1 50
7. Rationalist News (Australia).	2 00
9. The Humanist (USA) —	5 00

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Treasurer,
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Readers' Forum

POSSESSION BY SPIRITS

Mr. G. S. Kumar is right in dismissing instances of persons having been possessed identified to be possessed by spirits-as cases of mental illusions or cases of hallucinations. The case of Mr. Gouda is also one such case. I would like to give my views as follows :

1. Physical conditions of the patient could be improved in the hospital. Mental condition was not treated in the hospital. When the patient used to murmur names of persons, shouted with violent physical outbursts on the midnight of 21/22-6-78, and when his senses were not at all functioning, suspicion about the mental condition of the patient should have arisen to enable them to approach a psychologist, psychiatrist or hypnotist.

2. All that Mr. Moulvi has done is some sort of a technique-though troublesome to the patient to unearth the deep-rooted feelings for the unconscious mind of the victim.

3. Stiffening in the body when air was blown into the ears of the patient can be explained by psychologists or physiologists. Will bringing of the smell/smoke of the extinguished paper near the nose, blowing of the air into the ears already poured with oil etc. not make anybody uneasy?

4. Mr. Kumar did not state whether he had asked Mr. Gouda about Mr. Gouda's belief regarding spirits-before or after the incident. Had he done so, a point could have been scored as regards the mental attitude and strength of Mr. Gouda.

5. Also, Mr. Kumar did not deal with what was the relation and what happened

between Gouda and Mr. Suraj before the death of Suraj. There must be something in between them to upset Mr. Gouda.

6. In this superstitious society, persons like Mr. Gouda fall victims to the thought (okayed by majority of the society,) about ghosts, devils, spirits etc.

7. When a patient has not been taking sufficient food for about 7 days and when he has suddenly been released from panic state, it is natural to grab the food offered and take it quickly.

8. Mr. Moulvi says that spirits can move as they like but find it difficult to enter the bodies of pious people. This is purely the opinion of Mr. Moulvi and some public. Normally, people, who have done wrong or who can not forget some bitter experiences or who are not free from some impressions gained during tragic incidents might become victims like Mr. Gouda. So statistics may reveal that the above kinds of people only are subjected to such experiences, but not the pious people.

9. According to Mr. Moulvi the food given has been consumed by the spirit inside and not Gouda and the spirit will consume huge quantities if fed further. Let us agree to this. If huge quantities are consumed by the spirit and when it is leaving the body of Mr. Gouda what happens to the food? Why the bloody spirit should take food through human beings? Why does it not take directly from the kitchen, store rooms, godowns etc?

10. I have never heard nor seen any where that any rationalist has experienced with this type of spirits' entering into his body. Why?

C. Partha Sarathy,
CCG TOWNSHIP.

Thank God, That I am an Atheist

These are the satirical words shot against atheists in olden days. After reading by theists "Possession by Spirits" by Mr. G. S. Kumar if we believe that spirits exist, we too must say "thank god that I am an atheist". For Rationalists this (non-existing) spirit and (non-existing) god are synonyms. If we believe one, we have to believe the other too.

My economics lecturer, Mr. Rahamathulla Khan, who is a religious person beats these spirits with rationalist rod. He says that there are no sprits, it is only a mental disturbance. He questions as to why spirits are mostly heard of in villages and not in towns and cities? As Suraj was a friend of Gouda, I was also having one dearest friend Mr. K.B. Narasimhulu. It is said by my parents that I am soliloquying and sounding his name 'My Narasimhulu' My Narasimhulu at nights in my deep sleep. Here my mind is disturbed by Suraj to a larger extent.

Moulvi's treatment i.e. inhaling the smoke is a kind of medical treatment to a person whose mind is disturbed. If Moulvi is able to talk to spirits, can't he order the spirit to leave the body without the help of paper, oil, cotton etc. Moulvi made Gouda inhale smoke which gave a blow to brain the stupor of his friend Suraj. Suraj said through Gouda 'I caught him on the neck'. In the happy ignorance of stupor, in all that tumult and commotion, Gouda is bound to say that his neck is paining.

This phenomenon of possession of spirit is not new to the subscribers of Andhra boom!, a Telugu weekly. Many persons write in it about possessions, but almost all from villages only. Not only spirits and devils, but also some gods like Narasappa possess human body according to religious persons.

By mounting the hill of Rationalism I ask them to show the place where spirits dwell. I want to go and dash them.

N. Vijayakumar
KURNOOL

△



Cow Protection or Worship?

(According to a press report, 146 communal clashes took place since the inception of the present Government at the centre
—Ed.)

The Apostle of Love and Compassion,
O'Sage! thou art out to save the cow!
But your record before us only show
Obscurantist fanaticism unadulterated.
Did you ever express your compassion for
fellow humans?

Cyclones unprecedented hit the eastern shores
And floods had devastated Bengal and Kerala
Millions perished both animals and men
Gushing waters swallowed the crops
Cyclonic winds uprooted trees and houses
Misery loomed large as 'god' ushered in his
destruction
Later the communal monster raised its ugly
head

Official version says it's 149 incidents
Aligarh, Banda, Bitpur in Bihar
Aurangabad, Belchi, and Villupuram in the
South

But you, O Apostle are bothered of the cow
Not the slaughter, alas massacre of men!
Of Muslims, Harijans and other 'low' castes
But perhaps it was also because
You were on 'Maun Vrat'
We now hear you are to fast unto death—to
save the cow!
Love for cow is nothing but a fad
For you have no love for living beings.

G. Viswanathan,
BOMBAY.



NEWS AND NOTES

BOMBAY PAYS GLOWING TRIBUTES TO DR. KOVOOR

At the request of the Bombay Rationalist Association, the Sheriff of Bombay had convened a public meeting on Friday, 22nd December, 1978 at Cama Hall, which was presided over by Mr. Bhai Vaidya, the Minister of State for Home, wherein following resolution was moved by Mr. Justice R. A. Jahagirdar, which was seconded by Mr. B. P. Saptarshi, Chief Metropolitan Magistrate.

"This meeting of the citizens of Bombay pays its tributes to late Dr. Abraham Thomas Kovoov who died on the 19th Sep. 1978 at Colombo, after a heart attack, for his yeoman service to the cause of rationalism

"His death, though an inevitable and natural phenomenon, should serve to remind the rationalists of Sri Lanka and India in particular and the world in general that the rationalist cause propounded by howsoever powerful a personality will not be achieved in the lifetime of a single individual but the struggle must be carried on by all concerned without pause till the end. This meeting of the Citizens of Bombay re-affirms its conviction in the rationalist cause for which Dr. Abraham Kovoov lived and fought and extends its hand of co-operation to the rationalists all over the world in the struggle against superstition, religious bigotry and spiritual fraud.

"We again take this opportunity to pay our tribute to this deceased gentleman of the highest order, scientist of international repute, humanist to the core and exhort all friends of humanity to carry forward Dr. Kovoov's messages to the far and wide corners of the world."

Justice Jahagirdar said that Dr. Kovoov by his researches, speeches and writings created an infra-structure for scientific inquiry into the superstitious beliefs which marks the progress of society and he had invariably exposed the miracles perpetrated by babas and saints. Mr. Saptarshi regaled the audience by his experiences of superstitious beliefs and advised to discard them for better living. Mr. Hariharan Poonjar stated that rationalism bereft of economic equality will not gain vitality. Mr. A. P. Jairaman, a nuclear scientist stressed that in an era when biological evolution has reached upto nuclear technology, science and rationalism are like language and its grammar. Dr. Avinash Suklikar, an eminent economist, analysed the drawbacks caused by superstitious beliefs on social economy and advised every one to adopt rational way of thinking. Prof. G. S. Shahani emphasised that our educational syllabus be so changed that it should inculcate scientific temper and spirit of enquiry in the younger generation. Mr. G. Vishwanathan exhorted the rationalists to emulate the sacrifices of Dr. Kovoov and his wife and should donate their eyes, kidneys and the whole body to the hospital as has been bequeathed by Mr. Y. A. Lokhandwala, the present President of I.R.A. Dr. R. K. Joshi cautioned the Government for its patronage by way of monetary grants and other concessions to certain organisations parading under the guise of propagation of scientific temper amongst the people which in fact helped to perpetuate traditional illusory mythological beliefs and practices. Mr. Lokhandwala

asserted that 1979 can be observed as World Children's Year only when children are liberated from the indoctrination and brainwashing by their parents and society into making them adopt their way of believing and acting traditionally on superstitions and myths. Mr. Bhai Valdyia, Minister of State for Home declared himself as a confirmed rationalist and lamented that amongst national leaders none is found to be a rationalist like M. N. Roy and Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia. He was happy to see so many rationalists gathered to pay tribute to Dr. Koveer.

RATIONALIST FUNCTION AT ANANTAPUR

A Discussion on 'Society-Rationalism' was organised at Anantapur by the Local Rationalist Association on 25-12-78, under the presidentship of Mr. P. Pedda Reddy. The participants included the noted poet Mr. Kaloji Narayana Rao (on Rationalism—Literature) Mr. Chalasani Prasad (on Rationalist stories), Mr. Tripuraveni Madhusudana Rao (on History of Rationalism) and Mr. Y. Kasipathy (on Rationalism and politics). The discussion was followed by a cultural programme rendered by Mr. V. B. Gaddar and party.



JUSTICE R. A. JHAGIRDAR MOVING THE CONDOLENCE RESOLUTION
AT B.R.A.'s MEETING

Sitting from Left : Mr. B. P. Saptarshi, Chief Metropolitan Magistrate,
Mr. Bhai Valdyia, Minister of State for Home. Sheriff Mr. R. K. Batra,
Mr. Y. A. Dokhandwala, President, I R A, Mr. A. P. Jaisraman and
Mr. Hariharan Poonjar.

Back Row from Left : Mr. V. M. Gopte General Secretary, B R A. Mr. M. K. Samant,
Vice President, B R A and Prof. G. S. Shahani.

RATIONALIST WEDDING

One of the most progressive marriages ever to be conducted was witnessed at Madras on 21-1-79. The film actress Ms. G.S. Halam married Mr. Fan Shantu, a Chinese gentleman, under the presidentship of the veteran rationalist leader Mr. Ravipudi Venkatadri, a member of IRA. The marriage was performed by Mr. Lavanam, son of Mr. Gota, former President of IRA without any religious or other rituals what so ever except for the exchange of garlands.

Many eminent people from different walks of life congratulated the bride and bridegroom on their inter-caste, inter-religious, inter-lingual and inter-racial marriage. Mr. G. Srinivasa Rao, father of Ms. Halam was also profusely congratulated for his bold step. It may be a pleasant surprise to many that Mr. Srinivasa Rao, his brothers and several other family members altogether numbering around 80—started social reforms by marrying outside their caste and propagating the principles of rationalism even before late Goraji performed the inter-caste wedding of his daughter in 1948. Many members of IRA and the India-China Friendship Association participated at the marriage.

On the eve of the marriage, i.e. on 20-1-79, a discussion on rationalism was organised by Mr. G. Srinivasa Rao and his brothers. The meeting which was presided over by Mr. Kondaveeti Venkata kavi was addressed by many eminent Rationalists from A.P. including Mr. Ravipudi Venkatadri and Mr. N. V. Brahmam from Chirala, Mr. Venigalla Subba Rao from Repalle, Dr. Tripuraneni Venkateswara Rao from Gudivada and Mr. Lavanam, and Mr. Tripuraneni Venkateswara Rao from Vijayavada and others.

* * * *

STUDY CAMP ON RATIONALISM

On 7th and 8th January 79, a study camp on Rationalism was conducted at Gudivada under the auspices of Gudivada Rationalist Association. The faculty included Messrs.

M. V. Ramamurthy, Vice-President of IRA (on Rationalism, Humanism, Atheism and Humanitarianism), Ravapudi Venkatadri, a member of IRA (on Need for Rationalism), Jwalamukhi (on Rationalism and literature) and Dr. Vijayam (on Religion and politics). A public meeting was also organised on 8th under the presidentship of Mr. M. V. Ramamurthy, at which Mr. Kondaveeti Venkatakavi, Jwalamukhi and others participated.

* * * *

K. R. A.

Kerala Yukthivadi sangam has decided to launch an Anti-caste campaign during January and April 1979. The State Committee also decided to conduct Padayatra in all panchayats during January.

Another resolution demanded the Govt of Kerala to order a "Scientific Enquiry" to expose the so-called "Makara Jyothi" by which thousands of people are attracted to the Sabari Mala temple.

Kerala Yukthivadi Sangham has also passed the following resolutions in its State Committee Meeting held on 10-12-78, at Trichur under the presidentship of Com Pavanam.

* * * *

HOW COMES EVIL?

Either God wants to abolish evil, and cannot;
Or he can, but does not want to;
Or he cannot, and does not want to.
If he wants to, but cannot, he is impotent.
If he can, but does not want to, he is wicked.
If he neither can, nor wants to, he is both powerless and wicked.
But if God can both abolish evil, and wants to, then how comes evil into the World?

—Epicurus

RESOLUTIONS

1. Kerala Yukthivadi Sangham hereby resolve that the law restricting the age of girls and boys for marriage is highly praiseworthy. We request the Govt. to take drastic measures to strictly implement the provisions of the law as early as possible. Again, we request the Govt. to deny any religious or communal appeal by any group or sect to exempt them from the purview of the law.

2. Religious and communal riots are increasing day by day in India. Narrow minded and blind superstitions contribute the major share in the cruelty of looting and killing.

Therefore, any attempt to prevent religious and communal riots, should inevitably tackle the problem of superstitions. If we admit cow as a 'Divine' Animal, we cannot root out riots connected with cow-worship.

We suggest the following measures for the serious consideration and bold actions by the Govt. of India.

(a) Religious or communal organisations should be prevented from working in political or educational fields. Religious teachings and prayers should be prohibited in all educational institutions whether private or government.

(b) Religion should be completely separated from the State in all ways and at all levels. (Ministers for religious endowments stand as pillars of mockery in a secular democracy).

(c) The Govt. should constitute a "Scientific Enquiry Committee" to expose the truth in all the so called "divine phenomena" claimed by siddhas, gurus, or babas of all sects. This measure will help in identifying "false messiahs.....".

BRA FELICITATES LAVANAM

Bombay Rationalist Association accorded a reception to Mr. Lavanam, son of IRA's former President, late Mr. Gora on 7-12-78 at Bombay. Mr. Lavanam, spoke about the achievements of the Seventh Congress of the World Humanists held in London between 31st July and 4th August 1978, which he attended along with his wife, Mr. V. M. Tarkunde, Mr. M. V. Ramamurty and Ms M. V. Subbamma.

The Indian delegates, offered to host the next congress due in 1982 and requested the co-operation of all the Rationalists, Atheists, Humanists and the like in shouldering this gigantic task. Mr. Lavanam also gave a brief account of his visit to U.S.A. and many West European countries.

The meeting was presided over by Mr. Y. A. Lokhandwala, President, IRA. Mr. V. K. Gupte, General Secretary, BRA welcomed the guest while Mr. M. K. Samant, Vice-President, BRA proposed a vote of thanks.

—G. Viswanathan,
Bombay.

* * * *

ASHRAM OR VICE DEN

Aurobindo Ashram has acquired notoriety. Foreign men and women gather. The local population is aghast seeing devotees in hot pants and bras. Apart from not meditating themselves, they do not let the local population go about their routine. Ashes and ganja smoking are most common. Free love is practised.

What is more the C.B.I. are hotly pursuing them. The Ashram has been raided twice for unaccounted money. Aurobindo Ashram may rank next to Ananda Marg and Melvazhi!

'Have Me' She Said, 'For I Am Divine!'

Some Experiences of
P. T. Paulose,
CALCUTTA

One evening in the early 1960s, a young man of Kerala was sitting on the lawns of a church gazing at the church spire. As the rays of the evening sun fell on his face, he looked depressed. He had lost his mental composure. His mind was confused. As the church bell rang for an evening prayer, he stood up and made his way to the church.

WHEN CHRIST LET HIM DOWN:

He was a religious man. When he was blindly influenced by his parents to believe in Christianity and to take Jesus Christ as the son of God and as his Master and Saviour and Bible as a Holy Book without giving any change to his brain to think freely. He made it a habit to visit the church on every Sunday for the mass. He had even given lectures in the church and taught students in Sunday School. He was taught by his parents that when in trouble, Jesus Christ alone could bring him peace.

The years went by. He was shaken by circumstances and he now needed a support. He wanted to have mental equilibrium and felt that he had every right to turn to God for solace. That is how he sat on the lawns of the church feeling depressed. He went almost to all the important churches in Kerala stood on his knees in front of the altars and prayed to the heavenly father. His heart cried out for mental peace. But his tears

were in vain. Jesus Christ did not bless him nor did St. Mary nor St. John. He soon lost faith in Christianity.

THE 'DEVADASIS' IN THE TEMPLE:

He soon started calling on Hindu Gods in Kerala. He sent offerings to the Guruvayoor temple to appease Lord Krishna. He sent offerings to Sri Ayyappan on the Sabari hills. He worshiped Chottanikkara Bhagavathi, Ettumanur Appan and Kadapattoor Appan, the famed Gods, but to no avail.

Utterly disappointed, the man, a history lecturer remembered Ochira Parabhrathma, a God who was reputed for 'miracles'. He took a bus to Ochira—some 125 Kms. from his home town, taking Rs. 25/- for expenses. A festival called the TWELVE LIGHTS FESTIVAL was going on in Ochira village. He reached on the 12th day of the festival. Jostling crowds precluded his entry into the main temple. A cultural programme was going on near the temple and nearby groups of people were quarrelling and drinking country liquor from temporary shops erected for the festival. As he managed to reach the temple gate, a fatty black woman of about 35 years with heavy breasts suddenly appeared and pushed him and dragged him to the side of a tarpaulin hut where half a dozen prostitutes were sitting eyeing him hungrily. The prostitute who dragged him offered herself for Rs. 5/- while others looked at her with envy. She even told him that she could sleep with him throughout the night in the near jungle if he paid her Rs. 15/-. She claimed that she was carrying on her trade with "divine spirit." He told her that he was a religious man and had come to worship God and give offerings to him. She said "But that will not be necessary. If you take me and give me something that itself is worship and offerings to god because I am possessed

by a Divine Spirit". When she was about to drag him into the hut he collected his entire strength and hit her and ran into the crowd and made his way to temple clutching at his wallet containing money.

THE PHONEY LIMB AND THE THUGS

Before entering the temple, as per the custom, he removed his chappals and kept them outside and proceeded to the Sanctum. Suddenly a half naked man appeared at the door way and gave him a wooden replica of a human leg. Immediately another scantily dressed man appeared and gave him a wooden rod. They said, "If you want to go to Parbrahma, you must carry this human leg and rod" with the leg held in one hand and the rod in the other the man made his way to the Holy place. The two men, who had given him 'leg' and 'rod' stopped him again and asked him to return the 'leg' and 'rod' and the man did so. After collecting back their 'leg' and 'rod', they demanded Rs.20/- from the man. The man explained to them that he had only Rs. 20/- out of which, he could part with Rs. 10/ Knowing that the man was new to the temple, they were vociferous in their demand. Seeing the man reluctant, one of the thugs threatened him with a dagger and shouted in a low voice: "This is Ochira, give us Rs. 20/ and get lost, otherwise your body will be the food-stuff for the animals in the nearby jungle". Because of the noise of the prayer and the bells tolling continuously, nobody heard or noticed the plight of the poor man. The man parted with Rs. 20/- and made his way to the gate. He found his chappals missing too. The two men were in fact the priests of the temple. Having no money with him, he walked bare footed to the nearest town Kayamkulam near the sea shore. There he worked with the fishermen for two days and earned Rs. 10/- and made way to his native place, Koothattukulam.

* * * *

The cheated and disappointed man is now one of the members of the Bengal Rationalist Association and is the author of this article.

During the last 15 years, I worked hard to find out the truth. When I look back at my earlier folly I am ashamed at myself. But these experiences had given me enough strength to raise my voice against religion, superstition and God and they have led me to the conclusion that there is no life after death and god is a beautiful lie. I learnt from my experiences that religion is not only corrupting men's mind, but it also exploits them socially and economically. In India, when the people are not getting enough education, when crores of people sleep on pavements in hunger and penury why are crores of rupees lying idle in the temples and churches? At the famous hindu temple at Guruvayoor in Kerala, an amount of Rs. 2 crores is being spent to beautify Krishna's temple with gold. When the son of man is begging in the streets for filling his half stomach, is it proper to beautify a temple with gold by spending such a huge amount? I know many people who have become beggars by giving offerings to God. Among the charlatans in India, Satya Sai Baba claims to be God incarnate and an orator. In the recent cyclone in Andhra Pradesh, his home state, the number of people killed was nearly 50,000. As a God, he should have avoided that natural calamity. Where was he when that grave disaster took place? At least did he try to help the victims of Divi and Avani-gadda after the calamity as the A. P. Minister Mr. Krishna Rao did walking among corpses and physically helping in their disposal?

Even now there are many temples in India where people are being killed to make the imaginary goddesses pleased. Recently, in a remote village in the district of Keonjhar in Orissa State a 35 year old widow and a

mother of 4 children was sacrificed at the altar of the village goddess, BALAMUKULEI. The blood which oozed out from the throat of the widow which was slit open was carried to the temple by the leader of the village to fulfil the wishes of their deity, Balamukulei. The priest and the leader of the village were later arrested by the Police.

Even after 30 years of independence, in our democracy, the rich are becoming richer and the poor poorer. This, I feel, is because our system of democracy functions within the frame work of religion and god. Godmen and cheats carry on their nefarious activities with the connivance of ministers and VIPs. Free thinking is our only weapon to fight in the cause of rationalism. Kudos to FREE-THOUGHT in this bold endeavour!

△

THE "MIRACLE" MAGNET

How about this for a Godman's trick? A second before, a sheet of copper is resting on the plate of an apparatus. Suddenly, for no apparant reason, an intricate shape appears in its place. "Appears" is the right word because the human eye cannot follow the process, which takes place at almost the speed of sound.

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Save them, O Mother!

Late Ninan I. Chacko

Bharat my country dear, my mother dear,
Haven't I always kept you to my heart near?
Towards me you have been so loving ever,
In my loyalty towards you did I waver?

From the days of the hoary past,
Shelter and succour always given thou hast,
To races and peoples so divergent often
And made their unruly nature to soften.

Children you have dark, brown and fair,
All in your bounty and glory get a share,
In culture and ways of life they may differ,
But care and love on all you do confer.

Faiths and creeds diverse your kids follow,
You aren't worried be they sound or hollow;
Mother dear, how tolerant to them thou art,
Follies of kids you haven't taken to heart.

Where love for all did the Buddha teach,
Hatred to neighbours your children preach;
In the name of Almighty the God of love,
We ignore our fellow-men but worship the
cow!

Tolerance and goodwill aren't in our vision,
But for fanaticism worst we 've a passion;
In the antics of class hatred we do thrive,
To further selfish interests alone we strive.

Mother dear, that this be your sad fate,
Even to think of, with all my heart I hate;
To dogmas and creeds your kids fall a prey,
Save them, O mother, and show them the
way,

Reminiscences on a Great Rationalist

On this occasion, the name which comes upper most in my mind is that of late Dr. A. T. Koveor, the doyen among the rationalists of the world.

Dr. Koveor breathed his last on 18-9-78. Born in an orthodox christian family to a well known priest, he would have been anybody else other than a rationalist, but for his evergrowing inquisitiveness which always restlessly sought to find out the truth.

Naturally his interest was not confined to any particular subject and he went on to acquire a treasure house of knowledge in a number of subjects including religious scriptures. He was moved by the fact that these were being used to exploit the common man to subdue and enslave his spirit. Thus his intellect was sought to be dulled and he doomed to his status quo of ignorance by the indoctrination that a 'god' guided the destinies of all living creatures. Thus rendered servile, he could readily serve the vested interests of the rich who were in collusion with godmen!

THE CRUSADER

Dr. Koveor started his crusade against all superstitions including god, religion and caste, all created by man to serve the self interest of certain classes.

I can not fully list the multifarious activities of this great crusader against all kind of superstitions in a few pages. I shall however recall here my short encounter with this great man.

During one of IRA's divine miracle exposure campaigns at Bhilai a question was thrown at him by the press regarding the award of Doctorate degree to him for his thesis on para-psychology. Immediately came the reply from Koveor that he was awarded a Doctorate for proving the fallacy of para-psychology and repeated it so as to avoid any misunderstanding that he approved para-psychology.

THE SARDARINI OF RAIPUR

Again, when some of us were waiting at Durg Railway Station to receive him, the first thing he told us after getting down from the train was "Please make this Sardarji understand that I have a programme today and I will definitely attend to his case tomorrow".

The incident goes like this. A Sardarji was travelling along with Dr. Koveor from Nagpur. He wanted Koveor to treat his wife

SOME RUSSIAN PROVERBS

1. Seek the brave in prison, and the stupid among the clergy
2. The mouth of a wolf and the eyes of the priest are never satisfied.
3. Beware of a bull when you are in front of him, of a donkey when you are behind, and of a monk wherever you are.
4. God is the guardian of fools
5. You are born, baptized, married and buried, but for all you must pay the priest.
6. When the priest visits you, do not be overjoyed, he will soon begin to beg.

who was a psychiatric patient living at Raipur. Sardarji wanted Kovoov to go to Raipur and see his wife first. He was prepared to offer anything for it. However, on our intervention the Sardarji was convinced that Dr. Kovoov could not go to Raipur on the same day, but he could bring his wife to Bhilai the next day for Dr. Kovoov to analyse the case and give proper advice.

The next day the Sardar and his wife met him and the problem was solved. This shows that the popularity of Kovoov was not confined to any particular sect, community or religion.

There is an oft-repeated question as to why Dr. Kovoov keeps challenging godmen to prove their super-human powers while these godmen do not throw similar challenges. The answer to this question, in Kovoov's own version, is that this was the only way they could be exposed. And the godmen knew very well that they could never stand the test with Dr. Kovoov—that is why none of them came forward to accept the challenge. A thief or a cheat never exposes himself! It's the cops who have to go after him!

Now Dr. Kovoov is no more. It is the duty of every rationalist to keep burning the torch he lit and on behalf of M. P. Rationalist Association. I assure all of you that we will do our best in this direction.

P. Parameswaran,
BHILAI

△

The Panorama of Indian Womanhood... 2

THE STORY OF A NUN

by Gopal Madras.

(Some devout, mostly poor catholic families send their young girls to the nunnery to live under servile conditions. The second poem in this series can rightly be dedicated to Sister Maureen (refer FREETHOUGHT May 1977 issue) who traumatically conceived a babe in a convent killed it under great emotional stress, stood trial and was acquitted—Ed.

Saramma was a sweet little babe
On the Malabar coast of yore
Her mother adored the cute little babe
Her father did even more

Sarah grew to be a nice little girl
Who went to church for the 'Mass'
She prayed in the church as a fine little girl

And knelt before the holy cross!

Later when she was six years old
She went to school an' played
And read the bible as her mother told
And lit a candle an' prayed

When she was eight, her mother fell ill
Struck by the typhoid fever
And very very ill, her body was still
As the illness wouldn't leave 'er

The worried father prayed before Lord
"Do save her, my dear wife,
I will offer Sarah, to thee O Lord,
To serve the church for life!"

Soon his wife was no more sick
The typhoid fever had run!
A doctor's medicine had done the trick
But Sarah had to be a nun

* * * * *

Soon, one day Sarah left with a sigh
And was packed off to the convent
The little girl wept an' her eyes were dry
To serve 'god' she'd been lent!

The little girl fed on spiritual food
For a life devoid of fun
Dressed in white and tonsured she stood
A slave of 'god'—the nun!

Victims of Fear

by

Mrs. Margaret Bhatt

"We are all tattooed in our cradles with the beliefs of our tribes; the record seems superficial, but it is indelible. You cannot educate a man wholly out of the superstitious fears which were early implanted in his imagination," wrote Oliver Wendell Holmes.

Superstition is defined in the dictionary as "unreasoning awe of something unknown, mysterious or imaginary; a tenet, scruple, habit, etc founded on fear or ignorance." This clearly establishes the emotional basis of superstition as belief founded on unreason, incomplete knowledge and fear—three things which make perilous the paths that people traverse.

Perhaps one of the stranger paradoxes history will record of this our present age of the computer, space exploration and moon landings, is surely the boom that superstition now enjoys.

Astrology and ancient cults flourish once more in the West, and not only do Indian godmen earn us valuable foreign exchange, even our panchangs and astrological almanacs find ready markets abroad. America alone spends a billion dollars annually in providing aid and comfort to the insecure and fearful through charms, talismans and amulets. Future-casting has even plugged into modern technology. I remember hearing a well-known woman astrologer on BBC whose column is carried by most British papers tell of how she now uses a computer in her

predictions because her best customers are from across the Atlantic, many of them being big business houses wishing to know whether the signs are favourable each time they launch a new venture.

Abacadabra is back, and charlatans make fortunes selling mood-rings, birth-stones and birth-charts, or run clinics to give astrological guidance to those who are unable to gain control of their own destiny.

Cheats batten on people's credulity, and sorcery and witchcraft have revived once more in England and Europe with self-styled witches and members of covens claiming to possess supernatural powers.

Are these dubious cults likely to fade out when the novelty wears thin? Toffler describes the new interest of the West in the occult as "a rampant intellectual laddism" symptomatic of society which is failing to cope with too-rapid change. With the incredible scientific advances of today and the swift disappearance of old heroes and institutions, people experience a feeling of disorientation and grasp at straws as they are swept along with the current.

"Our response to the loss of control, for example, is a revulsion against intelligence. Science first gave man a sense of mastery over his environment, and hence over the future. By making the future seem malleable, instead of immutable, it shattered the opiate religions that preached passivity and mysticism. Today, mounting evidence that society is out of control breeds disillusionment with science. In consequence we witness a garish revival of mysticism. Suddenly astrology is the rage. Zen, yoga, seances and witchcraft become popular pastimes. Existentialist oracles join Catholic mystics, Jungian psychoanalysts and Hindu gurus in exalting the mystical and emotional against the scientific and rational."

In the early sixties it was estimated that over a thousand papers in the USA carried astrological columns and had some 20 million readers. Several British magazines cater only to prophecy and the occult, one of them with a mailing list of fifty thousand. Paperbacks on the occult are doing a flourishing trade.

Dorothy Wentworth-Walsh, Australian journalist, writing in *Femina* magazine on the new religion of astrology, tells of a similar boom in her country with radio stations in every state broadcasting daily predictions for each sign of the Zodiac. She herself once wrote an astrological column in a newspaper-only to prove that it could be done. Nevertheless she found it impossible to shake people's faith. Thousands of supposedly rational readers hinge their entire day's decisions on two lines of information put out by some charlatan who has found a quick way to make a fast buck. It ought to be a matter of shame to Indians that the cheats in the forefront of these phoney cults are godmen, gurus, and maharishis who preach shallow philosophies in well-endowed ashrams where meditation and other kinds of therapy have made idleness and selfish living a respectable thing.

In India our obsession with superstition and the occult is not because science has proved an over-success and intimidated us; it is because science has failed to make any impact at all. Therefore we seek to make our futures malleable through the manipulation of the supernatural.

"When man worries about his destiny he invents a monster called Fate," says the proverb. And not even the most rational among us can claim to be entirely unaffected by superstition. In the complex societies found in India we are inevitably drawn in as disinterested participants. Superstition has shaped most of our social mores. It is evident in our languages, in idiom and proverb. Our folk-

lore abounds with magical references to our flora and fauna. Folk-medicine is largely based on social superstitions. Customs surrounding birth, death, marriage, the secondary status of women, diet and caste restrictions are all rooted in social superstition, which even enlightened legislation has failed to change.

Fame, wealth, and success is what people would wish to see written into their horoscopes. But only the wise recognise that the "desires for success, fame and wealth are euphemistic names for the fears of failure, poverty and obscurity." The desire for success is really an inversion of the fear of failure. And it is this unrecognised fear that leads the superstitious to search for assurance through future-casting and astrology.

The most widespread social superstition in our country is the fear that envy on the part of our peers will destroy us and what we have through the Evil Eye, so we seek protection through counter magic. We dare not speak too highly of what we possess and in so doing assume the same cautious attitude as the tribal sculptor who deliberately notches a flawless piece of work in some secret place to render it imperfect even while appearing perfect.

People are afraid to be proud when their children are admired, and if a fine healthy child inexplicably and suddenly falls ill, they are sure it is the Evil Eye. Charms and amulets are tied around their waists and wrists, and when babies are taken out of the house, a blotch of *kajal* is put on their faces to "disfigure" their beauty.

A similar fear in tribal societies leads elders to call a child by a derogatory name which describes it as black, squint-eyed or lame. This is to ward off the Evil Eye, for physical perfection poses a threat to the

person who has it, and it is more likely to be marred than ugliness. Neither can we blame such a belief on ineducation. I remember attending the christening party for the first-born son of an educated couple. The child's name was first whispered into its ear! but since he ran great risk with so many people looking at him, his mother—a post-graduate in Social Sciences—had placed a kitchen knife upright in one corner of his crib against the possibility of someone thinking him attractive and thereby causing him to fall ill.

It is the superstitious fear of failure that makes people somewhat uneasy in the presence of complete success, happiness, good fortune and even perfection. To fortify their good luck they are careful about horoscopes, panchaangs, and inauspicious times, performing rites like jap and havan when their stars are likely to prove unfavourable.

On a less ostentatious level others follow personal rituals like carrying lucky pieces on their person, touching wood, avoiding walking under ladders, keeping clear of number 13, or following their astrological charts faithfully by wearing a particular colour or gem-stone on a particular day, and so on.

What do they hope to achieve through these rituals? In one word: Control. They are in search of certainty. Even prayer and supplication hopes to achieve the same end. But even while fear gives rise to this search for certainty, fear also stops them short of finding it because they are then afraid of being too successful.

Robert J. Ringer, in his book **Looking Out For No. 1** makes a forthright analysis of how fear inhibits because instead of taking control ourselves, we are always letting other factors control us. Therefore when people act out their superstitious rituals they are trying to succeed through a negative and irrational way. Ringer's formula is rational and positive.

"You might be shocked to find that a large percentage of your actions are motivated by fear," he writes. "It's this preponderance of unfounded fears which unnecessarily disrupts your life."

The idea that it is possible for each person to be completely responsible for himself is difficult for many to grasp because they cling to their fear. But what does fear do? It intimidates, and this intimidation is ever-present in human society. We need to keep asking ourselves: "Why am I doing what I'm doing? Be honest in your answer. If you can trace the reason for your action to any kind of fear, you are being intimidated."

Intimidation means victimisation. People who are conventional out of fear are victims of religious and social superstition, of obsolete and harmful customs, and of attitudes that propagate prejudice and suspicion.

There is nothing necessarily wrong with personal idiosyncracies as long as they remain mere quirks and do not turn people neurotic or psychotic. "Just because something is in vogue, doesn't make it good or bad," writes Ringer. "It only means that more people are doing it, wearing it or saying it. If you rationally decide upon a different course of action, however, that doesn't make you bad, stupid or crazy. It makes you unique!"



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Cow-Slaughter Ban—A Sinister move of Obscurantists

-Y. A. LOKHANDWALA,
President, Indian Rationalist Association.

The present demand for imposing ban on cow slaughter in Kerala and West Bengal, is being pressed by all the four Sankaracharyas. A press report says that they are meeting shortly at Kaladi in Kerala to chalk out the course of action in this regard. Vinoba Bhave, a 'State-saint' as termed by some people, has threatened to launch a fast unto death to get this demand acceded to by the said two state governments.

We rationalists are at a loss to understand the rationale behind this demand. What scientific basis is there behind this demand, save the religious sentiments of some obscurantist Hindus? How could it be justified to impose such a demand on other religionists since we have a secular democracy? No particular religion should enjoy any privilege over other communities.

There is nothing on record to show that this demand is prompted by mere compassion towards animals. These highly resourceful religious bigots had not expressed any concern or extended any helping hand when thousands of our brethren perished in the cyclone on our eastern shores nor when the devastating floods heaped untold miseries on poor people in West Bengal and Kerala, as well as when innumerable human lives and property were destroyed in communal and caste riots that took place in Allgarh, Belchi, Bitpur, Villupuram, Aurangabad, Varanasi, Kanpur and the like, where caste Hindus slaughtered number of persons belonging to minority communities like Muslims, Harijans, Buddhists, Christians and other backward classes.

Both Kerala and West Bengal States seem to be an eye-sore to certain political and obscurantist reactionary forces and since these two states are presently engaged in organising succour to the flood victims in their states, they can ill-afford even to consider any such animal welfare venture. There may be cow worshippers in Kerala and West Bengal but their number is limited to orthodox and obscurantist Brahmins and Vaishnavas. How is this minority justified in imposing its will on the vast majority? Is this minority prepared to bear the economic burden of maintaining the old and unproductive cows? Have they not ignored such advice given to them by Gandhi decades back?

We rationalists have neither any objection nor any concern (save that it is superstitious and unscientific), if somebody worships the cow or any other animate or inanimate object, so long it is confined to himself as his personal affair. It should not be allowed to be made a public cause at taxpayers' expense.

We congratulate the governments of West Bengal and Kerala on their bold stand in this matter and appeal to the scientific temper, if they have any, of those who enjoy power and pelf to desist from exercising such unsecular, obscurantist ideas. We equally entreat the rationalistically disposed intellectuals of the country to raise their timely protest against Man-slaughter that is being perpetrated, rather than cow-slaughter. Δ

A RATIONALIST'S WILL

(The following is the full text of the Will of Mr. N. I. CHACKO, a Member of I. R. A. who suddenly expired on 11-12-78. It is hoped that all other Rationalists will emulate the example set by him in making their last testament..... Ed.)

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

"For sometime past I have been feeling worried what others will do with my body when I am dead. I have no belief in God or in a soul or life after death. I am known, or rather taken as, a Christian, having been born and brought up in a Christian family. Therefore it may be that, unless I leave a testament, my friends and relatives may give me a Christian burial. Let it be known to all concerned that I will have no such nonsense.

Immediately after death occurs to me, my body should be made over to the nearest Medical College so that they can make the best use of my remains. If there are arrangements available, my eyes should be donated to any needy person or persons, or kept in the eye bank for being so utilised. If the medical authorities need my skeleton, they could have it.

When death occurs to me, there need not be any fuss. There would be no religious rites or prayers. It is not necessary that my children should be worried about being present at the time of disposal of my body. In fact there should be as little delay as possible in making over my body to the medical profession, the idea being that they should be able to make the best use of my remains.

I realise I will be wounding the feelings and sentiments of my sister who stays with me. But I would plead to her not to be offended or worried. If she thinks over, she should know that the so-called attachments are all so unreal. My father, who died when I was hardly four years old and of whom I have no memory, lies buried in an unknown grave in a hamlet (Ezuth) near Adoor in Kerala. My mother, who incidentally died on this day fifteen years ago, and my wife have been buried in a cemetery in Cochin. My sister's husband lies buried in his village cemetery and most probably my sister's body, when she dies, may be buried elsewhere. What does it all signify, or has this any significance at all?

So, in keeping with my firm convictions, my body should be disposed of as I have willed herein. If I die here in Tiruvalla, my body could be made over to the Medical College at Kottayam. If I die in Delhi, the All India Institute of Medical Sciences could have my body.

All this I write on my own free will today the twenty seventh November, 1978 on which date incidentally I have also completed revision of my manuscript "Jesus Star of the Orient."

Sd. N. I. Chacko

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The Winter Hero of Kerala

Ms. Sudha

During the months of December—January, especially in the southern parts of India one may often hear shrieks of 'Swamiye Saranam Aiyappa'. This animated full-throated repetitive rendering is in praise of the presiding deity of the Sabari Hills in Kerala.

Bare-foot pilgrims : The deity so invoked is the Dharma Sastha or 'Lord Aiyappan' who is verily the winter hero of Kerala. As the black-robed devotees make a beeline sporting an unshaven beard and 'rudraksha' beads worn around their neck, trekking the last part of the pilgrimage on bare feet over hilly tracts, carrying a bundle of coconut, rice and ghee to be faithfully handed over to the Lord. Their imaginary 'Lord' of the sabari hills should be indeed having a hearty laugh!

Wasted Mandays : The number of worshippers runs into lakhs every year. Between Jan. 6th and 14th in the current season 30 lakh pilgrims are reported to have visited the shrine. These pilgrims spend many days over travel and many more days in preparation and strict observance of draconian rules. Thus many lakh man-days are wasted in a poor country to which Jawaharlal Nehru gave the clarion call 'work is worship' and 'Aram Haram Hai'—for indeed such a wasted and misguided zeal is at in to 'Aram' or rest.

Mating of male gods : The Aiyappan was supposed to have been born out of the mating of two male gods. That is why he is called 'harihara suthan' or the son of

'Hari' or Vishnu and 'Haran'—the destroyer Shiva.

The very legend of the birth of Aiyappan goes like this. Lord Siva the Almighty—omniscient is supposed to have granted a blessing to Padmasura which landed him in soup. Though omnipotent himself, Siva turned to Vishnu, his colleague for rescue, which was not possible by the 'great protector' himself! Then contrary to reason and logic Vishnu—a male became a female enchantress Mohini and burnt Padmasura enticing the latter. The Omniscient Lord Siva then fell for Mohini and she (or he?) gave birth to Aiyappan. Hence his birth itself forms part of a stupid yarn.

Aiyappan was supposed to have been a legend in his days—a great hero around whom great heroic exploits are woven into stories which resemble fairy tales.

Where Sex is taboo : There is a peculiarity as far as worship and pilgrimage to Sabarimala is concerned. The temple is open only for a few days in the month of December and January and later only on the 14th of April. Not every one can go to the temple—not even all believers. There is a strict code of do's and don'ts to be followed before setting foot on the temple.

Every person who intends visiting the Sabari hill temple starts wearing a 'mala' (usually Thulasi or Rudhraksha mala) or rosary under the guidance of a 'Guru-swami'—who is a person who should have gone to the temple at least three times previously. Then he observes regular fasts, abstains from smoking, alcohol and sex for 40 days prior to his departure to the temple. Will not such forced repression of the natural habits and the sex urge interfere with the pilgrim's mental equanimity? ('Acharya' Rajneesh—please note!) Frequent bhajans are held during preparations with the loud

speakers blaring out and disturbing the peace of the locality, culminating in a pooja in which they fill coconuts with ghee and with such other offerings and tie them up in a black cloth bundle with two knots—one portion contains personal belongings while the other holds offerings to the Lord Aiyappan.

DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

The way to Sabarihills is not well laid and due to the heavy rush sanitation too is found wanting. Every year quite a few pilgrims die due to travelling hazards or exposure. The devout pilgrims attribute such death to infidelity. Even considering them to be infidels, is it not ironical that God should punish those who go to see him instead of converting them to believers or at least pardoning them?

The Lord discriminates against women. Or may be that he is misogynist! Women are not allowed to go to Sabarimala as they are said to be unclean. If biological disability which is a natural phenomenon is despised and held to be a pollution, the Dharma Sastha must have helped in totally redeeming women, elevating them to unpolluted heights—instead of ostracising them!

Lord Aiyappan is supposed to have come to this earth to kill Mahishi, a demon. He did not choose any ordinary man's house to grow up. He, as a baby was found in the fields with a chain of beads on his neck (for which reason he was named Manikandan) by Rajasekharan, the king of Pandalam. He grew up as a prince.

HINDU GOD BEFRIEND'S MUSLIM ROBBER

Means, they say, cannot justify the end. But the great Aiyappan saw no meaning in

this axiom. According to legend Vavar, a Muslim by birth and a dacoit by profession was not only pardoned but given the coveted place before Sabarimala itself because he distributed his loot to the poor. Even today the pilgrims visit Vavar's temple before going to see the Sabarimala deity.

GOD WRIGGLES OUT WITH A TALL PROMISE :

The greatest of all jokes is that the Lord has promised Sabari—his devotee that he would marry her the year no Kanni Aiyappan (i.e. a new pilgrim) goes to Sabarimala. This shows that even Gods, like politicians, promise the impossible. What a way to cheat a devotee!

While other gods have already established puranas of the past only, Aiyappan's stories are multiplying, thanks to the ardent devotees and the gullible mass of ignorant people. Every year there are a number of stories woven around the theme of the great Lord's kindness and succour to the needy on the hills and punishment suffered by the non-believers.

CANARDS SPREAD BY A.I.R. :

Even the All India Radio, Madras, which usually broadcasts a number of songs in praise of the Lord, has gone a step forward this year and had broadcast a serial entitled 'Swamiye Saranam Aiyappa' on its commercial broadcast. The serial was made up of a few short stories alleged to be true happenings along with narration of Aiyappan's birth and the glory of his life. One of the stories in it goes like this. A Doctor—who acted as the Guru Swami—was a rationalist but as he criticised Aiyappan, met with an accident. He was about to die and all the doctors had given up hope. But his faithful wife prayed to the Lord. The

husband had a new lease of life. Thenceforth the Doctor became an ardent devotee and went every year to Sabarimala. This story is ridiculous. An educated doctor can never change himself merely because he escaped death, more so if he were a confirmed rationalist. Further, Aiyappan does not seem to be a sport. Why should he be so cruel as to make any man suffer immensely just because of his criticism? How can any man worship one who was responsible for his sufferings? An illogical story is thus told and unquestioningly listened to by all merely because of the emotional connotation involved in the latter part of the story where a crest-fallen devout lady prays for the permanency of her tilak, turmeric and thali (Mangalya sutra) which our vernacular languages depict as the great assets of a wife.

There are similar stories, repeated every week. All these have the 'punishing' element of the 'Lord' in common.

THE GREAT HEALER EXPOSED:

It is said that all ailments vanish if one goes to the Sabari Hill temple and that all wishes get fulfilled. But if that were so, why do the pilgrims themselves suffer from pain and disease? On the way to Sabarimala there are a number of medical camps to attend on the pilgrims. It is ironical that the god who cures all pain and disease is not able to cater to the good health of his own pilgrims at such close proximity!

Fear of wild animals is constant in the forest around Sabarimala. There are a number of instances of the death of pilgrims due to these animals. But no one blames Aiyappan for it, they only say that the victim must have sinned, otherwise he would never have met with such an end. Even if indeed the unwary pilgrim had committed a 'sin,' the great Lord who could pardon a dacoit must have saved his pilgrims.

A god who is reputed in legend to have brought all the tigers in the wood for his mother's sake seems to be incapable of saving his pilgrims from the wild animals!

GOD THRIVES ON IGNORANCE

The Ignorance of the mass, the weakness of the infirm, the pain of the diseased, the worry of the distressed—the inadequacies of man in general are exploited to create a saviour who negates the very concept of a saviour and an omnipotent god who is powerless to control injustice, disease, death and poverty of even his ardent devotees! An omnipresent god who is to be seen only in his abode after undergoing a rigorous term of self-denial! This is Aiyappan—the winter hero of Kerala. △

Let Reason Prevail Upon Superstition

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Religion & God - A Personal Viewpoint

- Naresh Sitlani

As an atheist without suffering God's wrath or any misfortune for the last ten years I am pleased to share my views on Religion and God, with the fellow rationalists and readers of FREETHOUGHT.

Religion has done more harm than good but pervades all the activities of our daily life. Religion has its origin in the Fear-of the unknown and unseen. A whole class of quacks like Sadhus, Babas, Brahmins, Gurus, Gawas and Bagwans etc., derive their earnings (which largely go untaxed) by perpetuating the bogey of God. Dogmas cloaked in the garb of moral righteousness are charaded before us to confuse us and block our rational thinking. We are told that God is being appeased through the medium of these self-proclaimed Godmen. These charlatans, are deified as god-incarnate worshipped with great reverence.

WHERE THE GODDESS SCRIBBLES ON THE FOREHEAD: The spectre of religious rituals follows us from cradle to pyre. All kinds of idiotic pujas are performed during one's life time. There is a puja for every event with one common factor-money in cash and kind is transferred from the gullible performer of the puja to the sophist who is conducting the puja. Two glaring examples of our stupidity and stunted thinking are found in two communities among Hindus. In one the child is given a name on the 6th day after birth. On that night a goddess is supposed to visit the house at night and etch the future on the forehead of the child.

In another community, on death of a person, clothes, utensils, cot etc are given to the Pandit conducting the death riter. This is believed to reach the deceased. An umbrella is also included in this booty to protect the departed soul from rains in the heavenly abode. Needless to add, that the Brahmin-the beneficiary of such misplaced charity-can be found using this loot on this very earth.

The fantastic tamasha of pujas doesn't end with death. The survivors feed and enrich the Brahmin every year on the death anniversary. A truly novel way of transporting clothes and food to the life after life.

FAITH, LUCK AND FORECASTING GIMMICKS:

It has become usual for us to lay the cause of all our failures squarely at the doors of 'FATE'. We also feel relieved in blaming fate for all our failures as; (a) 'Fate' can't refute our charges and (b) we don't have to face the fact of inadequacy within us. It behoves us to accept the responsibility of all our actions-successes and failures. It is amusing to see people gloat over their successes while shrugging off their failures.

TOBACCO'S NEW USES

Medicine pronounced its verdict on tobacco a long time ago, but it seems that the plant isn't all bad. After special processing, it produces an ether oil with strong antiseptic action and the pleasant smell of fresh tobacco leaf. Specialists have recommended it for men's colognes, lotions and creams.

This year 4,000 kg. of tobacco oil was produced in Georgia (only one gramme is needed per bottle of cologne).

with unconcern and attribute it to bad luck or unfavourable stellar positions.

To day magazine is deemed complete without a column on astrology. Palmistry is being given the status of science. The big humbug of predicting the future has permeated to all the strata of society.

For the gullible commoner we have a plethora of palmists on pavements and those who use parrots to pick out of a deck of cards purportedly containing future predictions. For the elite we have the suave, glib talkers masquerading as experts on palm reading, numerology and what have you. Just think for a minute, how two persons, one a multi millionaire and other a beggar can have a common prediction if they both happen to have same zodiac sign!

CONCEPT OF GOD:

It is truly baffling how the educated class people also believe in the concept of God-on all mighty, all powerful force, overseeing all our actions. It is a strange paradox that the educated people chose to live on two different planes-believing and practicing scientific principles at work places (college, office) and otherwise going about their lives, dominated by Gurus, Yogis, Dadas, Babas and sadhus. Among Indians there seems to exist superb harmony between the dichotomised thought processes-rational. won't be surprised at the scenario of an Indian scientist analysing moon rocks in the day and waiting to sight the moon to break the fast in the night. One explanation of this sorry plight may be that we are steeped in this of thinking. In the childhood these traditions and beliefs are virtually drilled into our brains and there they remain etched. It is nothing short of naivete to believe in The Maker, the Creator of an orderly universe (there seems more disorder than order in the world). If there is anything orderly then it is

purely by accident of natural forces. It is lack of imagination on our part to ascribe a beginning to the universe, earth or mankind. It is plausible that the universe would have always existed. When conditions were conducive the life began on planet earth in the form of unicellular being and the evolution process has led to the Homo-sapiens. There is enough evidence of Evolution in the fossils, unearthed by archaeologists. It is true, all the happenings around us may not lend themselves to scientific explanation as of now. But that only means that with the presently available knowledge and tools it is not possible to explain the behaviour of certain phenomena. When the knowledge grows, we will be in a position to scientifically explain the phenomena which today the protagonists of irrationality, call supernatural. Even as you read this many 'miracles' and phenomena thought to be inexplicable one being brought within the ambit of rational scientific explanation in the laboratories the world over.

RELIABLE

A Rhodesian stopping at a garage these days to fill his tank up with petrol is liable to be made to stand at attention and be yelled at if his car has a speck of dirt on it, the Guardian writes sarcastically. The reason is that many retired army officers operate petrol stations. They include a former general officer commanding the whole Rhodesian army, a former chief of the air staff, and many other senior officers. What probably decided them to do it is reliable delivery of petrol. If they ever run out of petrol, the British paper said, a quick phone call to Shell or British Petroleum should do the trick.

CHILDREN'S CORNER

Hindu Scriptures Retold No. 2

Ms. Vasundhara

SITA WINS RAMA

Rama : Mr. Janak, I understand that you have advertised for an alliance for your daughter, Sita. I have come to seek her hand

King : Yes—my boy—but have you not Janak : heard of our conditions ?

R : Yes—I did—but let me hear from you first hand.

J : I have a giant sized bow—Sita daily plays with it. She wants to marry the person who can handle this bow. You know we need 10 healthy and hefty persons to lift it.

R : I hope I can do it—please give me a chance
(The huge bow is brought on an equally huge trolley)

R : (Lifting the bow) O king, see my strength. It's child's play for me—let me now shoot an arrow with it—oh my goodness—the bow is broken !

J : Well done my boy—you are really the greatest and strongest man on earth. I accept you as my son-in-law

(The marriage is over with all pomp and show)

Sita : Dear darling—do you know how much I love you ?

R : How much ?

S : I hope you won't mistake me if I reveal a secret ?

R : I love you so much that I would be the last person to mistake you.

S : Even before you approached my father I heard that you never had any girl friend. I wanted a loyal and faithful husband like you. On the eve of your visit, I replaced my original giant bow with a specially made hollow bamboo bow. If one lifted it, it was sure to break ! No wonder it broke into pieces in your hands.

R : Really ? ! !

A TRADITIONAL " MORAL SCIENCE " LESSON

Who made you ?

God made me

Why did God make you ?

God made me to know him, to love him and to serve him.

A RATIONALIST CHILD'S VERSION

Who made God ?

I made God !

Why did you make God ?

I made god to know me, to love me and to serve me ! !

Guru-Sishya-No. 2

—By. PONNU



The Vanishing Miracle

Book-Review

Creation or Evolution

by John Bowden

(Rationalist Association of New South Wales.
59 pp. 1973)

Bowden's book is a scholarly analysis of a question which is still kept alive by Fundamentalist and Evangelical sects. In 1859, when Darwin published *The Origin of Species* it rocked the Christian world by challenging God's Word. However, the theory of evolution was by no means new, having been propounded in the eighteenth century by Erasmus Darwin and Jean Baptise Lamarck but dismissed as an "aberrant doctrine." But the controversy Darwin's book set off made many scientists take another look at their beliefs.

"It was geology, Darwin, and the doctrine of evolution that first upset the faith of British men of science," wrote Russell in *Unpopular Essays*, for the inevitable questions that arose were ones which we may now find amusing: At which point in evolution from ape to man did our ancestors acquire Free Will? When did the lowly amoeba in its long evolutionary climb achieve an Immortal Soul? Who ate the apple—*Pithecanthropus Erectus*, *Homo Pekinensis*, or Pildown Man?

The controversy is now become a matter of academic interest to scientists, for in searching for mankind's origins in the strata of the earth instead of the nebula, the abundance of fossils has made evolution an established fact. Even enlightened churchmen no longer feel obliged to force a choice on people by saying: Darwin or God.

Bowden's book is devoted to demolishing the arguments of those fundamentalists who

still reject the evidence of their eyes, and who, supported by money and money power, still perpetuate through radio, literature and Bible courses, the theory that God made man in his own image by fashioning him out of the dust and breathing life into him, along with a helpmate, who for some obscure reason, had to be fashioned from one of his ribs. And these two he placed in a garden called Eden along with all the birds, reptiles animals and living creatures as they now exist.

Foremost among these exponents of the creation myth is a group which styles itself the Worldwide Church of God, founded by Herbert W. Armstrong, which also publishes an attractive monthly called *The Plain Truth* from Australia. Some years back, in a spirited effort to establish a readership in India, the group ran a series of advertisements in the *Reader's Digest* offering the magazine free to anyone who was interested in knowing the truth.

In the May 1962 number of *The Plain Truth* the editor forthrightly declared: "Any honest scientist will admit that neither creation nor evolution can be proved." This appears like a retreat from the infallibility of the creation story. However, Bowden took up the challenge evident in this statement; and his book seeks to establish which of the two theories are therefore more reasonable being the more plausible. This he does by meeting the fundamentalists on their own ground.

When Darwin published his book he had very little fossil evidence to support his theory and this was a disadvantage. But today so much evidence has been discovered that sometimes the problem appears like a jigsaw puzzle with an over-abundance of pieces. Certainly conflict persists, but only within the evolutionary idea itself where the limited framework within which the original concept was propounded must now be expan-

ded and deepened to accommodate a breathtaking sweep of events over the face of the whole world and covering more than four million years in time.

Despite this evidence, however, Herbert W. Armstrong's belief is unshaken. He claims to have disproved the very basic premise on which the evolution doctrine rests by showing that paleontology itself is an elaborate hoax. He has therefore "chopped down the tree of evolution," and the cause is carried further by his son Garner T. Armstrong.

The arguments of this group of thinkers are in line with the teachings at Sunday School where children sing of "All things bright and beautiful" in the affirmation that "The Lord God made them all."

All of Nature is part of God's beautiful plan, every living thing showing His goodness and thoughtfulness. But how does one account for creatures preying on each other, or for all that is gruesome, fantastic, futile and cruelly wanton in Nature? Did this good and thoughtful creator also think up cancer, leprosy, dementia, and diseases causing bacteria?

The argument is that everything is here for a purpose and so birds prey on those things which are injurious to humans. Surely it would have been simpler to avoid creating them at all. But then plague, pestilence and pests could not have been used to punish those who went against "His" will.

Like his father, Garner Armstrong's knowledge of fossils is based on half-understood facts, and with these he demolishes the evolution of birds, fishes, animals and finally man himself. But in standing by the Holy-Whit he is obliged to ignore many cases in nature where an evolutionary process actually takes place within a single lifetime, as in the case of flat fishes like plaice and soles, clearly indicating that the Great Designer failed to complete his job.

In addition, within the past century since Darwin's day, we now have the sciences of Genetics, Biochemistry and Embryology along with unique methods for dating fossils like Carbon-14 and the Radium Clock. All of these have helped to establish that evolution is a long and unending process in which aberrations abound, mistakes are aborted or become extinct, and those which survive do so by modification. Of course, such faulty design and poor workmanship cannot be accommodated in a concept where God the infallible is the Master Designer. So the only way the design argument can be saved is by insisting that the Creator meant these mistakes to happen!

Considering the length of time taken by each such mistake to evolve and then vanish puts the Creator himself in a very poor light.

The Armstrongs stand much to gain from duping their gullible readers and listeners, along with those students who take their correspondence courses in which Lesson 11 states: "Satan, which deceiveth the whole world, planned that people should be misled by evolutionists and thereby become atheists."

But then even as God created the world so he also created Satan, if part of his plan was to have Satan oppose him. It follows that [the Armstrongs in opposing evolution are also opposing the will of God

"It is evident that for serious thinkers the evolution concept has gone beyond the realm of theory and can be regarded as an established fact," concludes Bowden. But for people with vested interests it is unlikely to go unchallenged for many years yet.

Bowden's books which also include *Archaeology and the Bible*, *Bible Absurdities* and *the Bible Contradicts Itself* are incisive and factual, with every argument supported by facts and figures and much painstaking research.

Ms. Margaret Bhatt

Test for Reason No. 17

HOW TO IDENTIFY ?

On an island live three classes of people. The Atheists always answer truthfully, the theists always answer falsely and the Agnostics alternate true and false answers. On your first visit to the island, you come across a person. How will you, in just one question, determine the group he belongs to ?

RULES :

1. The entries should be received on or before 15-2-79.
2. There is a prize of Rs. 10 in the form of books to be sent to the winner. If there is more than one correct entry the prize will be divided equally.
3. Readers are requested to quote their Membership Number or Subscription Number.

SOLUTION FOR TEST FOR REASON No. 16

The missing particulars can be inferred from the available data as follows. The Serial Numbers of the clues given in the problem (in the last issue) are indicated in brackets.

- (a) Blue House must be next to Red House and white one on the extreme right (7) & (5).
- (b) A lives in Green House i.e. Third or fourth from the left has neither C nor E as his neighbours (11). Thus B who is B's neighbour (1) & (8) and not A's must be in the Red House.

- (c) Since E lives in Red House and B in Blue House. C can be in the third, fourth or fifth house from the left. But since A who lives in the third or fourth house is not C's neighbour. A must be in the middle house, C in the white House and by elimination, the fourth house is occupied by D.

Now the position of the houses, their colours and occupants have been ascertained as under :

From Left	Colour	Occupant
I house	Red	E
II house	Blue	B
III house	Green	A
IV house	not given	D
V house	White	C

Now it is comparatively easier to obtain other missing clues.

(d) From (4) It is obvious that the parrot should be in second or third or fourth house. Again from (1) and (8) the cigarette smoker should be in the third or fourth house. In view of (3), the parrot cannot be in the third or fourth houses. The parrot is therefore in the second house (B,s) and the cigarette smoker must be D living in the fourth house.

(e) Since cat and the Horse are in the first and last houses (not respectively) (4) and dog is in the fourth house (9), the love birds should be in the third house owned by A.

Though not required, the remaining particulars can also be inferred as follows :

(f) As all other smokers have been placed. A is the cigar smoker living in the third house.

(g) From (3) & (6) we know that the Muslim should be in either second or third

houses. Since the cigar smoker who likes yachting lives in the third house (10), the Muslim who is keen on angling (2) should be in the second house (blue).

(h) Now the remaining two hobbies—photography and magic should be in the first and last houses. Since Jew is in the last house, from (2) it can be inferred that the Buddhist who is fond of Photography should be in the first house (Red). From (6) again it is apparent that the Hindu should be in the third House (Green). This leaves that D should be a Christian living in the fourth house.

(i) Similarly as four hobbies have been placed, we know that C is fond of magic who incidentally owns a House (12)

(j) As the horse owner lives in white house, the cat must be in the Red House (4).

Note :—It is regretted that against clue no. 9 'D' was wrongly printed as 'Dr.' The problem can however be solved even if it is taken as 'Dr.'

Congratulations to the following who have sent correct answers :

Mr. R. Achyuta, Hanamkonda
Mr. B. K. Ghosh, Nagpur
Dr. I. J. S. Jaswal, Snillong.
Mr. G. R. Menon, Ahmedabad
Mr. Sathiyathan, Calicut

The prize is divided equally among the above three.

HIGHLIGHTS OF MARCH ISSUE

Business—Rajneesh Style

—Gopal

In search of an Alternative Identity

—Ms. Margaret Bhatt

Soul and Rebirth

—Ms. Soma Sublok



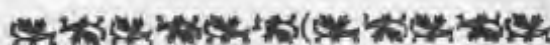
Mr. N. I. Chacko is dead

It is with deep regret, we announce the sad and sudden demise of Mr. Ninan I. Chacko a great rationalist and a member of IRA on 11th December 1978 at his residence at Tiruvalla, Kerala. He was 63. He died of heart failure. In fact he had survived 3-4 attacks earlier when he was in service. He retired as a Class I officer from Railway Board.

Mr. Chacko, as our readers are aware, was engrossed in writing books and propagating rationalist views and making others know of the inane and stupid fallacy of wasting one's time and energy besides losing one's individuality and self-confidence by blindly following religious faiths. Mr Chacko used to write for newspapers touching on these matters. He had already authored one rationalist book 'Going up?'—a satire on politics and day-to-day life. He had also completed one more book, 'Christ, the star of the Orient' which awaits publication. Recently one of his articles 'The Blood-Thirsty Gods' was published in December 78 issue of FREETHOUGHT.

Since he had no faith in soul or religion, he willed that his eyes should be donated to the needy and his body to the nearest medical college for experiments. But could not be fulfilled his last wishes, since he died in sleep at home and noticed very late.

The full text of his will is published elsewhere in this issue.



An Acknowledgement and an Appeal

We gratefully acknowledge the following donations for FREETHOUGHT received during the period June 78 to December 78.

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The above sum of Rs. 956-45 compares very badly with Rs. 2491-50 received during the year April 77 to March 78. As the financial position of the journal is extremely tight, other Members and well-wishers are earnestly requested to rush their generous donations. By March 79, we should try to reach last year's amount if not exceed the same. This may please be treated as personal and individual appeal.

—Ms. S. V. Vasundhra, Treasurer, I. R. A.

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We heartily welcome the following new members :

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M-482	Mr. Ravipudi Venkatadri	Chirala (A. P.)
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SM-58	Mr. L. Kameswara Sastry, B.Sc.	Anakapalli (A. P.)
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